

Standard 4000-03

Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness has been shown to be the single best predictor of success in beginning reading. Before children can understand the relationship between letters and sound, they must be able to identify individual sounds in words.

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words. Phonemic awareness is not the same thing as phonics. Phonemic awareness deals with sounds in spoken words, whereas phonics involves the relationship between sounds and written symbols. Therefore, phonics deals with learning sound-spelling relationships and is associated with print. Most phonemic awareness tasks are purely oral. Phonemic awareness training provides the foundation on which phonics instruction is built. Thus, children need solid phonemic awareness training for phonics instruction to be effective. Phonemic awareness should be explicit and taught in a logical sequence.

Phonological awareness is a much broader term than phonemic awareness. Phonological awareness includes identifying and manipulating larger parts of spoken language (e.g., words, syllables, onsets and rimes). Phonological awareness also includes other aspects of spoken language, such as rhyming and alliteration. Phonemic awareness is a subcategory of phonological awareness.

There are five basic types of phonological and phonemic awareness tasks:

1. The ability to hear rhymes and alliteration.
2. The ability to do oddity tasks. (Example: Three words are read to the student. The student selects the word that does not fit the pattern.)
3. The ability to orally blend words and syllables.
4. The ability to orally segment words and syllables (including counting sounds).
5. The ability to do phonemic manipulation tasks.

The first four task types should be covered by the end of kindergarten. The fifth task type is appropriate for introduction in middle to late first grade. Each task type does not have to be mastered before moving on to the next. Rather, a mix of appropriately sequenced activities throughout lessons keep children engaged and provide practice with all types of phonemic awareness tasks. However, instruction in oral blending should begin before instruction in oral segmentation.

Research indicates that approximately 20 percent of children lack phonemic awareness. For these students, the likelihood of reading failure is quite high. Scientifically based research tells us that phonemic awareness can be taught to preschoolers, kindergartners, and first graders who are just

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beginning to read, as well as older less able readers. Phonemic awareness and phonological awareness help children learn to read and spell. They are most effective when children are taught to manipulate phonemes in an organized manner. Phonological and phonemic awareness instruction is most effective when it focuses on only one or two types of tasks. Small group instruction in phonemic awareness training is more effective than individual or whole group instruction.

Teachers should not devote a great deal of class time to phonemic awareness instruction. Over the school year, the entire phonemic awareness program should take no more than 20 hours or approximately 10-15 minutes a day. Phonemic awareness training does not constitute a complete reading program. Rather, it provides children with essential foundational knowledge in the alphabetic system as part of beginning reading programs and remedial reading programs.

The following are possible suggestions and not all-inclusive:

Teacher Delivery

1. Provide instruction in phonological awareness through rhymes, songs, chants, alliteration, counting words in a sentence, and clapping syllables in words.
2. Provide activities in rhyming and rhyme recognition.
3. Demonstrate and encourage students to blend sounds to make words.
4. Provide opportunities for students to segment words, isolate, delete, substitute, and match phonemes in words.
5. Provide application opportunities for students to manipulate letters with sounds through word sorts, magnetic letters, Elkonin boxes, and white boards while matching letters to sounds.

Assessment

Formal:

Approved state, district, and school assessments.

Informal:

1. Checklists of sounds children hear in isolation or at the beginning, middle, or ending of a word; producing or hearing words that rhyme; and segmenting or blending words.
2. Observation of students' ability to produce, identify, and manipulate sounds.
3. Anecdotal records of behaviors students exhibit while producing or making sounds.

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Differentiation

1. Provide explicit instruction in the area of the student's need.
2. The areas of phonological and phonemic awareness are especially difficult for children with speech and hearing problems.
3. Demonstrate correct mouth formation to produce sounds.

Home Connection

1. Communicate the importance of children identifying and producing all the sounds of our language.
2. Provide suggestions for parents to help their child with rhyming words, blending sounds, segmenting sounds, and identifying sounds in isolation.
3. Provide home activities for parents to develop their children's phonological and phonemic awareness.

